

The Gospel of John

Chapter 1:6-28

December 15, 1996

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**
 - Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- **Review & Introduction**

In our previous study we discussed the pre-existent deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. His glory was with the Father, as the Word, since the beginning of time. In this section John stresses that the Word is the creator and the source of life, especially the life of mankind. However, although the Life was the Light of men, still those men were in darkness and they could not perceive Christ correctly.

- **Exposition**

John 1:6-28

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

- In this section, John begins his instruction on John the Baptist. The first point made is that John was a witness of the light. He was sent to testify to something and was not coming on his own authority but as one who was sent. The testimony offered by John was not just a human witness but the instruction is that he is a divine ambassador sent by God to be God's witness of the Light.
- The purpose of John's coming was that he was sent, but more specifically sent to be a witness. God is always careful to send a witness to testify to the validity of something or to authenticate some truth. God wanted the testimony of His Son to be sure and clear so He sent as a forerunner John to testify to the authority of Christ. Note that John's testimony did not make Jesus the Christ, John simply declared that which was true.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.⁹ That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

- Lest one be confused and place an improper importance on the Baptist, the author clarifies that John was not the Light but was only a witness to it.
- Christ came and walked among the people and performed many miracles. His life was not obscure or hidden from the people. He was a light to all people—even those blinded by their sin. Christ was a light to all people but not all people could receive Him in such a way that their darkened minds were given sight. But the point made in this portion of the text is that Christ came and was a light to all people in the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

- The author accuses those who saw Him of ultimate ingratitude towards Christ. Our Maker, our Lord, our Light, and our Life came into the world and we did not receive Him.
- Those who received the Lord as Lord did so not because of their lineage or because they attained something in their flesh to commend themselves to Him, rather they received the Lord because they had been born of God. Although the specific teaching on the second birth doesn't occur until later in the book here John begins the teaching on spiritual rebirth.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

- The Word, who is the pre-existent God, became flesh. Where once He was spiritual in nature, He took on the form of a human so that He might die. It wasn't just some experiment that Christ wanted to change places for a day with someone, rather the Word became flesh so that He could become a High Priest and offer the sanctifying sacrifice on the altar on behalf of His people.

- John contrasts the coming of the Law with the coming of the Christ. Although the law was given through Moses and is contrasted with the grace and truth coming through Christ, this is not to say that the law was bad or that Moses was not a faithful servant. If we can gain a proper understanding of the law and its purpose then we can see that the purpose of the law was to point us to grace. The reason the law was given was to drive us to the need for grace.
- No one has ever seen the full glory of the Father. But Christ came as a begotten son and declared to us the glory of the Father. John stresses again the deity of Christ by declaring that He is in the "bosom" of the Father meaning that they are one.

19 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."²² Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"²³ He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord," ' as the prophet Isaiah said."

- It is rather funny that the Pharisees had to ask if John was the Christ because they should have been able to tell. Their hard heartedness kept them from looking for the Christ properly.
- John denies that he is Elijah reincarnated because he wasn't. We do know he was the one who was foretold to come and that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah.
- The prophet that they were questioning him about was the prophet that Moses declared would be sent in Deut. 18:15. There Moses declares that the Lord would send a prophet like Moses whom the people were to receive and hear.

24 Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.²⁵ And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"²⁶ John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know."²⁷ "It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. NKJV

- The people sent by the Pharisees had apparently loaded them with questions to ask John. Clearly they didn't want to be seen asking him these questions probably because they didn't want the people to know that they were unsure who this man was. Their question for him dealt with the authority by which he baptized. There are at least two possibilities for understanding this point. The first is that we know from teaching elsewhere in the Scriptures that John indeed was the Elijah that Malachi said would be sent as a forerunner. Although John was not Elijah himself, he did come in the "spirit and power" of Elijah. This alone would give him the authority to baptize. Secondly, John was the son of a Priest which would put him in the priestly line and perhaps in this authority John baptized. This second position might also shed light on the implications of John's baptism of Christ which perhaps was the anointing which installed Christ as Priest.
- Without actually answering their question, John in essence tells them not to worry so much about his baptism because the more significant baptism is yet to come. John's baptism was apparently only offered to Jews who had repented of not only sin in general but who had forgotten the coming of the Lord. The repentance was one where they turned and looked forward to the Messiah coming and prepared themselves, by faith, for His coming. John's baptism was not a replacement for Christian baptism.